

TODAY'S LESSON

Title: Understanding the social environmental determinants of the health and development of Australia's youth

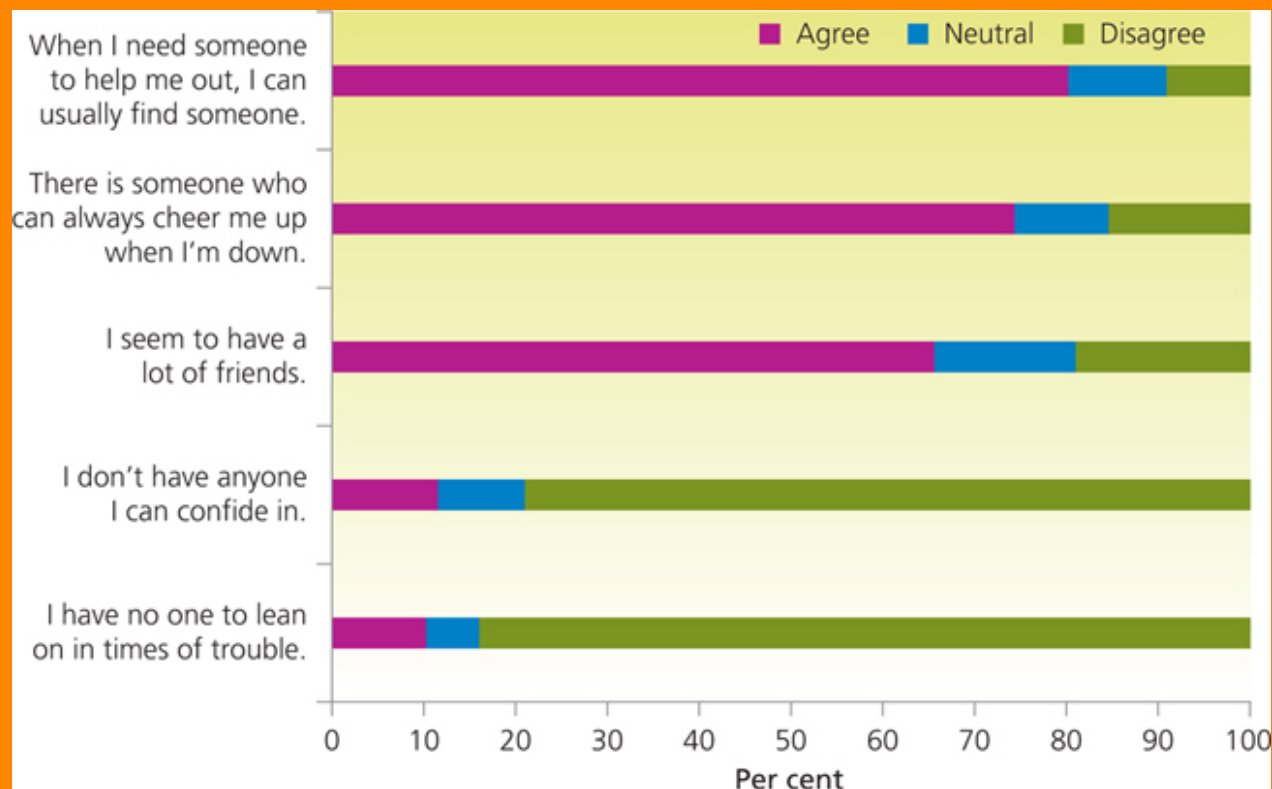
Success Criteria:

- I understand the impact of social environment determinants of social support on health & development.
- I understand the impact of social environment determinants of Community and civic participation on health & development.
- I understand the impact of social environment determinants of education on health & development.
- I understand the impact of social environment determinants of violence on health & development.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Youth with good social support tend to have lower morbidity and mortality rates than those without social networks or those with social networks that encourage risky behaviour. Social support may influence health and development in a number of ways:

- **People in social groups may positively influence the behaviour of other members in areas such as exercising or not smoking.**
- **Social networks create a knowledge base where people can learn new things that may benefit health and development.**
- **People with good social contact have a range of people to talk to and may therefore experience less psychological distress and handle stressful situations more effectively. Advice can be sought, which can enhance mental health.**



Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007, *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2007*, cat. no. PHE 87, Canberra, p. 104.

FIGURE 3.34 Ratings on social support scales, young people aged 15–24 years, 2004

COMMUNITY AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

- Like social support, being involved in community groups gives young people a social network and can generate a sense of achievement and worth. Although relatively few young people volunteer compared to people in other lifespan stages, many youth are involved in cultural and sporting activities. This gives them a chance to mix with likeminded people, which promotes social health and is a source of relaxation and stress relief, which promotes mental health.



- **Self-concept is a key area of emotional development that can be significantly enhanced by volunteering or being involved in other community activities. By contributing to the community in which they live, young people can derive a sense of pride and pleasure, enhancing self-esteem.**

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Education is one of the key defining aspects of youth. Education in schools and higher education institutions such as universities and TAFEs provides opportunities for youth to develop knowledge and skills that will prepare them for work in later years.

- Education is also linked with better health outcomes
- Those with higher levels of education report lower levels of illness and better mental health than those with lower levels of education.
- Education can promote awareness of healthy behaviours such as not smoking tobacco and maintaining adequate levels of physical activity.
- Those with higher levels of education are also more likely to secure jobs with better pay and prestige, which can lead to lower levels of stress and more income to pay for things like private health insurance and an adequate food supply.

- A number of factors can contribute to youth not accessing education services. They include:
- **geographical barriers** — those in rural and remote areas of Australia may find it difficult to get to a school because it could be hundreds of kilometres away.
- **social/cultural factors** — some parents may not place importance on formal schooling. As a result, children may be home-schooled or may receive little or no formal education.
- **socioeconomic reasons** — some individuals may not be able to meet the costs associated with education (particularly tertiary education), and this may influence their decision on whether to continue with formal study.

CASE STUDY

- Complete Activity 4.8 page 104

VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

Acts of violence occur across the country and no community is immune. **Violence in the community refers to acts of violence between individuals or groups.** These acts generally occur in public places such as streets, businesses, schools and the workplace. Examples of violence include assault, rape and psychological intimidation.

Violence in the community can affect the health and development of youth in a number of ways. **As a result of violence in the community, youth may:**

- **see violence as way of dealing with problems**, which can have negative effects on their social development
- **become involved in acts of violence themselves**, which can lead to physical injuries
- **become fearful of being out in the streets**, which can negatively affect mental health
- **be charged and receive a criminal conviction**, which can have a negative impact on social health if people no longer want to associate with them
- **become involved in antisocial behaviour such as gang formation**, which can affect social health and development.

Risk factors for violence in the community include having:

- inadequate community support
- no sense of community
- high poverty and unemployment
- a lack of recreational facilities
- overcrowding within the community
- a high incidence of alcohol use.

- Youths are more likely to be victims of violence than those in older age groups, but they are less likely than older Australians to report it to police.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, almost 10 per cent of young people aged 15–19 were assaulted in 2005. Mission Australia's *National survey of young Australians 2007* found that around a quarter of youth listed violence as a major concern.

HOMELESSNESS

Being homeless has many direct and indirect effects on youth health and development.

- The living arrangements of the homeless person may not be as hygienic as an established home, leading to disease and illness. This is regardless of whether the person is homeless as an individual or as part of a family. Not having shelter (i.e. being 'houseless') is only one part of the issue of homelessness.

The lack of security may leave the homeless more vulnerable to assaults, stress, depression and mental illness. Those who are homeless are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and unsafe sex. Being homeless can also lead to a cycle of poor socioeconomic outcomes because not having an address can make it difficult to receive social security payments or gain meaningful employment.



FIGURE 3.37 Being homeless can create a cycle of ill-health.

- Many organisations provide short- and long-term shelter for people who find themselves homeless, but they cannot meet the demand. There are still large numbers of people going without food and shelter every day.
- Obtaining accurate statistics on the number of young homeless people is difficult because they move in and out of shelters, and information from other sources is hard to find. Using several methods, the ABS has estimated the number of homeless people to be 1 per cent of those aged 12–24 years.



■ Chapter 4 Summary, Extension & Exam Questions.